

Peterson (MN)	Sweeney	Udall (CO)
Ramstad	Tanner	Udall (NM)
Sanchez, Loretta	Taylor (MS)	Velázquez
Schakowsky	Thompson (CA)	Visclosky
Sherwood	Thompson (MS)	Waters
Slaughter	Tiahrt	Wu
Stupak	Tiberi	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Tancredo

NOT VOTING—27

Berman	DeLay	Millender-
Blunt	Doolittle	McDonald
Boswell	Edwards	Murtha
Boustany	Fattah	Ortiz
Brady (TX)	Green, Gene	Paul
Brown, Corrine	Hefley	Poe
Camp	Hinojosa	Rush
Cantor	Hostettler	Sabo
Conyers	Jackson-Lee	Weller
Davis (IL)	(TX)	

□ 1159

So the Journal was approved.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

PRIVILEGED REPORT ON RESOLUTION OF INQUIRY TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. COBLE, from the Committee on the Judiciary, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 109-230) on the resolution (H. Res. 420) directing the Attorney General to transmit to the House of Representatives not later than 14 days after the date of the adoption of this resolution documents in the possession of the Attorney General relating to the disclosure of the identity and employment of Ms. Valerie Plame, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Pursuant to House Resolution 455 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2123.

□ 1202

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2123) to reauthorize the Head Start Act to improve the school readiness of disadvantaged children, and for other purposes, with Mr. LATHAM in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this bill to reform and reauthorize the Head Start early childhood program.

I want to commend the chairman of the Subcommittee on Education Reform, the author of this bill and my good friend, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE). I also want to recognize the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for their work to strengthen the Head Start program.

The School Readiness Act will introduce greater competition into the Head Start program and use that competition to leverage reforms that will result in a better program for the children Head Start was created to serve.

This bill will strengthen school readiness and increase the role of all 50 States and local communities in Head Start. It will protect children and taxpayers against the abuse and mismanagement of Head Start funds, and it will make Head Start more transparent and more accountable to parents and taxpayers.

I am pleased at the approach that this bill takes to solve the school readiness gap between Head Start children and their peers when they reach kindergarten.

There is no question that most Head Start children are better off in the program than they would have been without it. That is not in dispute here. But there is evidence that some Head Start centers could be doing an even better job of providing preschoolers with the academic foundation they need in order to succeed in school.

This bill will strengthen Head Start's academic standards by emphasizing cognitive development and the results of scientifically based research and topics critical to children's school readiness. It will also improve teacher quality by ensuring a greater number of Head Start teachers have degrees and are adequately trained in early childhood development, particularly in teaching the fundamentals.

I am particularly pleased about how the bill will improve coordination between Head Start and State and local early childhood education programs. We are going to improve program integration in all 50 States by encouraging cooperation and program coordination from the ground up.

The bill also addresses weaknesses in the Head Start financial oversight structure that have allowed the mismanagement and outright abuse of Federal funds meant for disadvantaged children. Local media outlets across the Nation have documented more than a dozen instances of financial mismanagement involving millions of dollars and thousands of children. This lack of program integrity and financial accountability is unacceptable. The Federal Government is investing nearly \$7 billion per year in Head Start, and every dime should be going to support disadvantaged children.

The GAO, the Government Accountability Office, in a report that we requested, found that the financial management weaknesses in Head Start are

resulting in diminished services for children. Unfortunately, there is currently no system in place to assure parents and taxpayers that these types of abuses will be prevented. This is unfair to parents and children. It is unfair to taxpayers. And it is unfair to the many high-quality, hard-working, law abiding people who operate Head Start centers across the country who should not be associated with the deeds of these bad actors.

Head Start is an important program entrusted with a vitally important mission. The vast majority of those in Head Start are honest individuals dedicated to making sure the poorest of our Nation's children have a chance to succeed.

The School Readiness Act takes critical steps to support quality Head Start programs and the children they serve by encouraging quality through competition, strengthening transparency and disclosure, and improving the financial oversight structure to protect children and taxpayers.

I would like to address one more issue that is the subject of great debate today. In numerous Federal programs across the country, faith-based institutions that want to lend a helping hand and providing critical social services are allowed to do so without changing the fundamental character of their organization. Former President Bill Clinton, for example, signed four bills into law that explicitly protected the hiring rights for faith-based organizations when participating in Federal programs.

The Head Start program unfortunately provides no such protections to these organizations. To the contrary, faith-based organizations are forced to relinquish their protected right to hire individuals who share their beliefs or they are not allowed to participate in the program at all. For many faith-based organizations, it is their very nature to offer help and support the neediest among us. Their efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina serve as just one more example.

Their mission defined by their faith is to serve their community. Yet, when they seek to participate in federally funded programs for this purpose, they must forfeit the identity that drives them to serve.

Today I urge Members to support an amendment that I will be offering on behalf of the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. BOUSTANY) to restore the hiring protections in the Head Start program so that faith-based institutions can participate fully without giving up their mission and character that make them such an effective partner for programs like Head Start that serve those in need.

Once again, I would like to thank the author of the bill, the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE), for his hard work on behalf of the nearly one million children served each year by the Head Start program. We have got a strong bill that will help give disadvantaged children the head start they need